



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
FIRE DEPARTMENT

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High Voltage Cables
Along Coyote Road
During Tea Fire

Wildland Fire Suppression Benefit Assessment District

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

2009

Message from the Fire Chief

For the third year in a row, Santa Barbara's residents have suffered the effects of over 252,000 acres of wildfire activity. The Zaca, the Gap, and the Tea fires have produced devastating outcomes on our forest, open space and our homes. The Tea fire was a brutal reminder of how vulnerable to fire we are in the City of Santa Barbara. And yet, the fact that no lives were lost and only 2 civilian injuries occurred is, I believe, a testimony to the work our residents have undertaken within the WFSBAD.

This fire was a "worst case scenario." The 50-70 mile per hour "Sundowner" winds, which started in a virtually inaccessible area on the fringe of the Los Padres National Forest, had a clear path directly into thousands of homes. The difficult, but orderly, evacuation of over 5,000 homes was a huge contributor

to the life-safety success of this event. The two evacuation drills within the City and the Montecito Fire Protection District in the past 18 months certainly improved the chances of such a successful evacuation. Residents in the high fire hazard area have helped to remove thousands of cubic yards of flammable vegetation over the past 2 years which, clearly assisted the responding fire agencies capacity to enter neighborhoods and save dozens of homes that would have otherwise been lost to the ravages of this conflagration.

There is no question in my mind, nor the minds of our firefighters, that the damage from this fire would have been considerably more devastating had it not been for all the good fuels reduction work conducted within the Assessment District. Our hearts continue to go out to the fire victims and homeowners who are



beginning the reconstruction process. It is our hope that this disaster will re-enforce your commitment to ongoing hazard mitigation activities and rest assured that your fire department will continue to enhance our capacity to help you in all fire prevention and fire suppression activities. Please continue with your excellent hazard reduction effort.

Yours for a more disaster resistant community,

Ron A. Prince
Fire Chief

Living With Wildfire

Wildfire has always been a part of the Santa Barbara Community. The chaparral environment has adapted over millions of years with fire as a natural part of its ecosystem. Current and past fire exclusion and suppression policies have resulted in a large accumulation of vegetation throughout the foothill area. When wildfire burns in these areas, it burns with increased intensity and severity. As vegetative growth and development continues in our urban wildland interface areas, there is an increased potential for loss of life, structures and resources, both natural and economic. It is only a matter of time until the next wildfire occurs.

Preparation for the next wildfire requires you to take **personal responsibility** to protect yourself, your family, and your property. Many property owners feel that a fire truck will be there to protect their property. During a major wildfire there will not be enough firefighting resources available to defend every home. Consequently, the most critical person in preparing and protecting your life and property is not the firefighter, but **you**, the property owner.

Fire is part of our natural environment. Our brush covered hills, canyons and forests burned periodically long before homes were built here. People have moved into this environment, and many of us have built and landscaped with no thought of wildfire. Today's wildfires burn fast and seasonal hot dry winds drive fires even faster, making them impossible to control.

This newsletter should be used by homeowners, within the WFSBAD, as a tool to aid individual wildfire preparation efforts.

Road Clearance Update

The purpose of vegetation road clearance is to reduce the amount of vegetation along roadways, enhance evacuation during a wildland fire, and allow greater access for fire engines and equipment to respond during a wildfire.

This year the Department completed 14 miles of road clearance (**400** cubic yards of vegetation) on top of the 35 miles (**758** cubic yards of vegetation) completed last year in the WFSBAD, for a total of 49 miles.

It is very important to maintain and keep up

the work that has been completed. Maintaining roadways is not only important for your safety but the safety of the community.

Santa Barbara City Municipal Code requires homeowners to make sure that vegetation on their property does not encroach onto adjacent roadways. This effort includes keeping evacuation routes clear of flammable vegetation and thinning vegetation along the roadways.

A map of the roads completed in 2008-09 can be seen below.



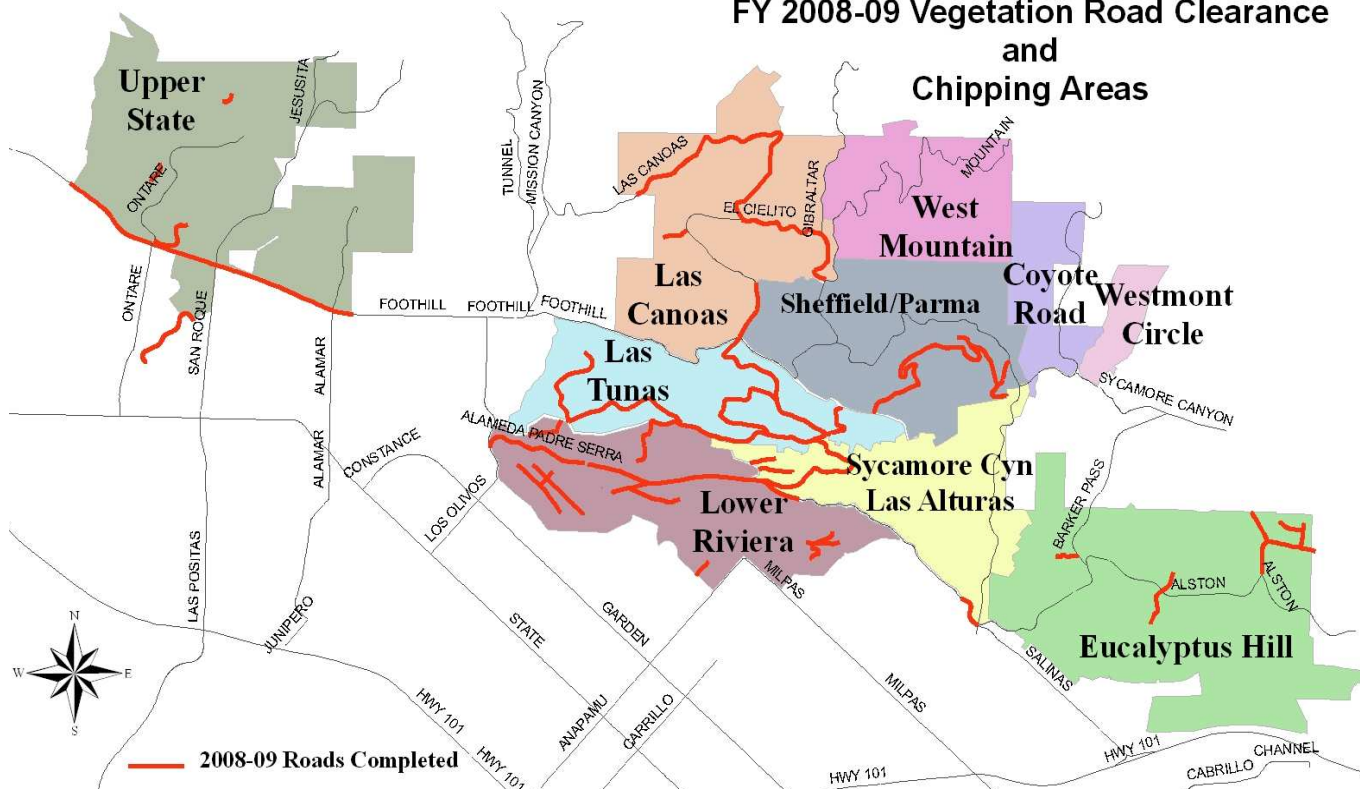
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2009 Defensible Space Chipping Areas and Completed Road Clearance

FY 2008-09 Vegetation Road Clearance and Chipping Areas



Additional Resources

Websites with information about native and fire-resistant plants and living in the Wildland Urban Interface

- Firewise.....www.firewise.org
- Fire Safe Councilwww.firesafecouncil.org
- FEMA—Wildfirewww.fema.gov/hazard/wildfire/index.shtm
- CAL FIRE.....www.fire.ca.gov
- Be Water Wise.....www.bewaterwise.com/fire.html
- USDA Forest Service.....www.fs.fed.us

Chipping Services

Vegetation chipping services will be available to all property owners in the WFSBAD area from March 2nd through June 15th.

Chipping services are provided to encourage property owners to create defensible space and provide a cost effective way to dispose of cut material.

The City wants to make this project environmentally friendly, and needs the homeowners help in doing so. Our goal is to re-use 98% of all chipped material. To achieve this goal we need your help. If you can use chips on your property please contact the Fire Services Specialist, Amber Anderson at (805) 564-5702.

There are very specific requirements of what can be chipped. The following chipping instructions outline the specific requirements. Vegetation that does not meet these requirements will not be chipped and will be left on site. The property owner will be responsible for the legal disposal of any material that cannot be chipped.

Chipping Instructions

- Cut vegetation should be laid out in a pile along the street area and outside of the drivable roadway.
- The cut end of all vegetation must face the street so contractors can easily handle material.
- Brush should be left in long lengths. It is much easier to chip. Branches should be no greater than 10 inches in diameter.
- Long piles OK as long as they are not over 4 feet in height.
- Old dead vegetation that has been lying around for years cannot be chipped (this type of vegetation damages chipper blades).
- Pine needles or other leaf litter cannot be chipped.
- Twine or string must not be used to tie vegetation.
- Rocks or other debris will not be chipped.
- Piles pushed or moved by mechanical means, i.e. tractor, cannot be chipped.
- Material in plastic bags will not be picked up.
- Grasses, palm fronds, succulents or agaves will not be chipped.



Vegetation properly stacked along roadway

Exotic pest plants that will not be chipped include:

- Arundo
- All species of ivy
- Castor bean
- Fennel
- French/Soft/Scotch/Spanish broom
- Ice plant
- Tobacco weed
- Pampas grass
- Fountain grass
- Mediterranean grass
- Tamarisk
- Any kind of Bamboo

For a complete list see our website.

Chipping Schedule

Listed below is the schedule for chipping services in the WFSBAD.

Please refer to the map of chip areas on page 2.

Put your vegetation out on roadways no sooner than two weeks and no later than the Monday of your scheduled chip week (second passes will not be made).



Contractor Chipping Vegetation

Upper State	March 2nd	—	March 6th
Las Canoas	March 16th	—	March 20th
Eucalyptus Hill	March 30th	—	April 3rd
Lower Riviera	April 6th	—	April 10th
West Mountain	April 13th	—	April 17th
Las Tunas	April 27th	—	May 1st
Westmont Circle	May 11th	—	May 15th
Sheffield/Parma	May 18th	—	May 22nd
Coyote Road	May 25th	—	May 29th
Sycamore Canyon/Las Alturas	June 1st	—	June 5th

YOUR ASSESSMENT DOLLARS PROVIDE FOR:

Vegetation Management Projects • Defensible Space Inspections • Chipping/Brush Removal • Public Education & Outreach • Vegetation Road Clearance • Customer Service & Compliance Support • Hotline 805-564-5737



Defensible Space

is an area around your home or structure where the vegetation is modified and maintained to slow down the rate and intensity of an advancing wildland fire. It also provides a safe area for fire-fighters to work and helps protect the surrounding vegetation from becoming involved should a structure fire occur.

Defensible Space

Defensible Space is the key factor in determining whether or not your home will survive a wildfire. That is why a large part of wildland safety in the WFSBAD lies in the hands of homeowners. In a year where Santa Barbara has lost over 238 homes due to wildfire, it is imperative that your home is up to the City's defensible space requirements at all times.

The City Fire Code specifies and requires annual clearance of flammable vegetation from any structure or building and public or private roadway on or adjacent to your property. The City of Santa Barbara Fire Department will be inspecting properties to determine compliance with City Municipal Code. Your property must be in compliance with these standards by June 15 of this year, and is required by law to stay in compliance year-round.

The requirements for defensible space vary based on your wildland fire hazard zone. There are two high fire hazard zones within the WFSBAD; the Extreme Foothill Zone and the Foothill Zone. In the Extreme Foothill Zone 150 feet of defensible space is required. In the Foothill Zone 100 feet of defensible space is required. See our website for defined zones.

A Lean, Clean and Green Landscape

Landscaping is among the first elements of a home that others notice. Enhancing the beauty and value of any property can be established by creating a balance of colorful plants, trees, shrubs, rocks, mulch and other landscaping materials. Fire safe landscaping uses vegetation modification techniques, planting for fire safety and defensible space principles all while being integrated into a homeowner's aesthetic desires and functional needs of the property.

Plants should be selected for their ability to reduce the wildfire threat. Fire safe plants have a high moisture content and are low growing. Their stems and leaves are not resinous, oily or waxy. Generally, deciduous trees are more fire resistant than evergreens because they have a higher moisture content when in leaf, but a lower fuel volume when dormant.

Irrigation is vital in fire safe landscaping to maintain plant moisture. The first 30 feet around your home should be well irrigated. Plantings beyond 30 feet should be irrigated, but to a lesser extent. As you get 70-100 feet from the home native plantings that require little or no irrigation should be used.

Placement and maintenance of plants is as important as plant selection and irrigation. All trees and shrubs should be planted to ensure adequate spacing between canopies to avoid creating fire ladders. Remember to plant trees at least 15 feet from chimneys, structures and power lines.

Fire safe landscaping uses driveways, lawns, walkways, patios, water features such as pools or ponds, fences constructed of non-flammable materials such as rock or brick, and large boulders or rock groupings. These hardscape features reduce fuel loads, break up the continuity of the landscape and reduce fire ladders.

When designing a fire safe landscape remember less is better. Simplify visual lines and groupings. A fire safe landscape lets plants and garden elements reveal their innate beauty by leaving space between plants and groups of plants. Open spaces are more important than the plants. The City of Santa Barbara Fire Department has a local fire safe garden where you can view and learn more about fire safe landscaping concepts. The garden is located at 2411 Stanwood Drive.

*We Are Here
To Help!*

Voluntary Defensible Space Inspections

The City of Santa Barbara Fire Department offers voluntary inspections of your property to ensure that your home is protected. During a major wildland fire the majority of homes lost are not engulfed by the fire front. They are lost when fire embers find a weakness in your home and start a small fire that can lead to total loss.

Santa Barbara is known for its extreme fire weather and has a long history of extreme loss during the Sycamore, Paint and Tea fires. In a wind driven fire there is no guarantee that your home will survive, but we can strive to make each and every home as safe as possible.

This last year we performed over 80 Defensible Space Assistance Inspections with property owners throughout the WFSBAD. Each and every one of the homeowners that asked for an inspection walked away after the inspection with a safer home and more knowledge than before. We again are offering this valuable service to the community. If you have any questions about how to make your home compliant with the City's defensible space requirements please contact us.



For voluntary inspections please call 564-5702

Wildland Fire Compliance

Beginning June 15, 2009 the Fire Department will be inspecting properties to determine compliance with the City's "Defensible Space Clearance Requirements." The requirements mandate the clearance of flammable vegetation from any structure and public or private street that is on or borders your property. **Your property must be in compliance with these requirements by June 15 of this year, and is required by law to stay in compliance year-round.**

If your property is not in compliance with the City of Santa Barbara Municipal Code, Chapter 8.04 at the time of inspection, you will be issued a warning and your property will be re-inspected.

Effective fire prevention measures can keep fires from starting and reduce hazards that threaten you and your neighbors' property. The intent of defensible space clearance is not to promote the indiscriminate clearing of land. It is possible to create defensible space and retain the visual beauty, privacy and environmental health of your property. The Fire Department urges you to learn more about wildfire and what you can do to prepare for it.

If you have questions regarding these requirements and would like more information on wildfire preparedness, evacuation and community involvement please contact the Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division or check out our website.



FIRE LOVES FUEL...

**It does not care if it is natural vegetation or part of a home.
It does not care if it is yours, ours, theirs, public or private.**

- Homeowners • Families • Neighborhoods • Businesses •
- Parks • Schools • City of Santa Barbara •

Working Together for Fire Safety, Prevention, and Preparedness



Vegetation Management



This year marks the full implementation of the vegetation management program for the WFSBAD. The program is aimed at creating a Community Fuels Treatment Network along the most Northern boundary of the City, as well as working with private land owners to reduce fire risk throughout the district.

The Community Fuels Treatment Network will provide a break between the continuous decadent stands of chaparral fuel outside the City boundary and the City area. This will provide a strategic last line of defense for fire protection resources to suppress a wildland fire before it

enters more highly populated areas of the City.

This year's project involves reducing the amount of flammable vegetation on over 20 acres in the Extreme Foothill Zone by approximately 1/3 to 2/3.

Vegetation management will be targeted on the removal of flammable vegetation (brush and under story) by preferentially removing exotic plants, thinning, pruning and limbing of vegetation to remove fire ladders, limbing up of oak over story, pruning out dead material, and thinning out continuous areas of brush using a mosaic pattern.



A large portion of this year's initial project was within the Tea Fire burn area. Before the fire, crews successfully completed approximately 1.5 of the 20 acre project. We have since modified the project boundary to include the remaining 5 acres that were unburned in the fire. The project resumed just after the first of the year and is on schedule to be completed by mid-March.

Upcoming Projects

- Skofield Park—Van's Meadow
- Completion of Community Fuels Treatment Network - San Roque/Ontare Area



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Blog Us!
<http://wfsbad.blogspot.com/>

Santa Barbara County Fire History

Year	Fire Name	Acres	Homes Lost
1955	Refugio	84,770	Several
1964	Coyote	67,000	100+
1971	Romero	14,538	4
1977	Sycamore	805	234
1977	Hondo	10,000	0
1979	Eagle	4,530	5
1990	Paint	4,900	524
1993	Marre	43,864	0
2002	Sudden	7,160	0
2004	Gaviota	7,440	1
2007	Zaca	240,207	0
2008	Gap	9,445	0
2008	Tea	1,940	238



W.F.S.B.A.D.

Were on the web...

We have updated our website! Our website is a great place to find links to fire safe landscaping, exotic pest plants, defensible space requirements, and current events. Make sure to check the web for upcoming community projects and updates on what is happening in the WFSBAD. The website is listed below.

<http://www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Government/Departments/Fire/>

Tea Fire Information

As an active member of the City's Land Development Team, we are in a unique position to assist in the Tea Fire rebuilding process. When the Tea Fire occurred, the LDT membership met and began the process of rebuilding before the fire was even out. Realizing that the time involved in any construction project can seem endless, we endeavored to create a more streamlined process for residents who lost their homes. Some of the issues considered in the process include:

- Tea Fire rebuilding plans will be given a priority in the approval process. Local design professionals have volunteered to assist in early consultations of Tea Fire projects.
- Under permit, residents could install a temporary trailer on their property to live in during the rebuilding process. City Council adopted our proposal on December 9, 2008.
- Homeowners are encouraged to make design changes, particularly if the changes improve fire resistance, sustainability or energy efficiency.
- Require all Tea Fire rebuilding projects adhere to the new code provisions for fire resistive construction regardless of design changes. Among the changes are non-combustible exterior walls and double-glazing of windows. Windows are often the weakest point in a structure during a wildfire, a fact that was underscored in this recent tragedy.
- Fire Department access and hydrant locations also play a role in the rebuilding process, both for evacuation and Fire Department ingress during an emergency.

For the future, the combination of continued evacuation and pre-fire planning, fire resistive construction, road clearance, defensible space and vegetation management will help to ensure a safer community when faced with the next emergency.

Link to Tea Fire Relief Information:

- http://www.santabarbaraca.gov/Resident/Home/Tea_Fire_Rebuild_Info

City of Santa Barbara Fire
Department
121 W Carrillo Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Phone 805.564.5702